wards calling out in a loud voice: "The Turks will be here in a few hours. Whoever feels strong enough, let him rise and follow us."
As a votary at the shrine of science he believed, both then and later, in the lawfulness of suicide; and he now coldly suggested murder to his surgeon-general, hinting that an overdose of opium would end the sufferings of those plague-stricken men who would have to be abandoned. It was long believed that such a dose actually had been administered to the sixty or more who were left behind. But the conclusive evidence that the report was false is in the fact that when Sir Sidney Smith occupied Jaffa the sufferers were still alive. Napoleon to the last defended the suggestion as proper, though he falsely denied having made it himself, and untruthfully declared at St. Helena that he had delayed three days to protect the dying patients. With cynical good nature, he told the fine story of how the noble French army surgeon Desgenettes had rejected the criminal suggestion, replying that a physician's profession was to save, not to destroy, human life. The rebuke was particularly scathing because the heroic doctor, in spite of his conviction that the plague was contagious, had already inoculated himself with the disease in order to allay the panic of the terror-stricken soldiers. The army was reduced to eight thousand. After a nine days' march through the burning sands, the exhausted columns of the French reached Cairo. Such was the unparalleled vigor of the survivors that a few days' rest and proper food sufficed to recuperate their strength.
More wonderful still, they soon believed themselves to have returned with crowns of victory. Their crafty general explained that but for the terrible heats of Syria, the pest, and the expedition from Rhodes, which